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AFRICA

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke
van die Kaap, Natal en Transvaal

Dutch Reformed Church
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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TIV BIBLE COMPLETED

The translation of the Bible into the Tiv language of Northern Nigeria has been completed by missionaries of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk of South Africa on the eve of the transfer of the missionary work in that area to the Christian Reformed Church of America.

The work started when the South African missionaries went to Nigeria fifty years ago, and the first booklet published in the Tiv language in 1914 contained certain chapters from the Scripture. The Gospel according to St. Mark was published in 1916, followed by St. Matthew in 1920, St. John in 1924, the Acts in 1931 and St. Luke in 1932. Those translations were then revised and published in one volume in 1936. Work on the second part of the New Testament was started in 1933 and was also completed in 1936, followed by the Psalms in 1938.

The translation of the major part of the Old Testament was tackled in December, 1938, and was not completed before 1951, the manuscript covering almost 1,600 written pages. The last ten years were devoted to the revision of the text, with the aid of Tiv assistants. When the Cape Synod of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk decided to hand over the missionary work in Nigeria to the Christian Reformed Church of America, the Mission Committee was instructed not to give effect to the final transfer before the completed translation of the whole Bible could be presented to the Tiv people.

The golden jubilee of the missionary work of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Nigeria was celebrated in April, when a memorial was unveiled near the old Salatu station. The Christian Reformed Church is now taking over an indigenous church with 13 congregations, 3,201 communicant members, eight native ministers, nine theological students, 2,634 candidates for confirmation, 19,431 Sunday school pupils and an average church attendance of 46,888.

"In these days we are grateful for what the Lord of the Harvest has done through the men and women who have helped to build the church from the foundations long ago," states Dr. G. B. A. Gerdener in Die Kerkbode. "How well we remember the early days when we sowed with tears. The idea was to stem the tide of Islam. It gripped the imagination and moved the hearts of our people. And what a struggle for life and death did not take place in the first period

before the breakthrough came and the Cross triumphed over the Crescent. Soli Deo Gloria!"

RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS

Questionnaires inquiring into the religious attitudes of students were distributed to 500 students at residences at the six major universities and colleges in the Western Cape at the end of last year. Those approached showed a comparatively even distribution of male and female students, of whom roughly three-quarters were Afrikaans-speaking and one-quarter English-speaking. They belonged to fifteen different churches and denominations (some isolated cases had no religious affiliations whatsoever) and were enrolled for more than sixteen different study courses. More than four-fifths of them were undergraduates. The most important findings were recently published in Die Wekroep, the magazine of the Students' Christian Association.

Only two per cent. could be considered atheists, since they did not believe in the existence of a deity, whereas 95.8 per cent. did and 1.2 per cent. were uncertain. Not a single female student did not believe in the existence of a god. As regards a personal relationship with their concept of such deity, 5.2 per cent. declared that this was not necessary and/or possible, whereas 1.8 per cent. were uncertain. Of those approached, 71.8 per cent. regarded themselves as Christians, 21.2 per cent. described themselves as "undecided" and 5 per cent. as "non-Christians".

The characteristic of a Christian most often mentioned was that he was a person who believed in (the existence of) God. Furthermore, special stress was laid on the fact that a Christian should bear out in deeds what he professed, should consistently live out his faith, etc. A considerable majority stated that they found it difficult to be or to become a Christian.

Three-quarters of all students approached attended church services "regularly" or "often", while the remaining quarter attended only "now and then", "seldom" or "never". Afrikaans and English-speaking students differed notably in this respect, as only about one-third of the latter group attended church often or regularly, as opposed to more than 85 per cent. of the Afrikaans-speaking students. Virtually two-thirds of the students were members of the Students' Christian Association.

The majority, namely 59.4 per cent., described their homes as "(very) religious", 32.4 per cent. as "moderately religious" and 7.8 per cent. as "indifferent" or "irreligious". Of the English-speaking students 20.3 per cent. placed themselves in the last group, as against 4 per cent. of the Afrikaans-speaking students. Further analysis revealed that the background of students had a profound effect on their church attendance and on their acceptance or rejection of the Christian Gospel.

The dominant impression gained from the survey was one of general "religiousness", the depth of which could not be accurately judged. The average student showed a more than passing interest in religion. The answers of female students were, in general, more posi-

tively orientated towards religion than those of the male students. Furthermore, a sharp divergence in the religious attitudes of English-speaking students on the one hand and Afrikaans-speaking students on the other was apparent virtually throughout the survey.

CURRENT COMMENTS

● "As a patriotic Britisher I am shocked and hurt at the official attitude in this land towards our most Christian and faithful friends of Africa. I can assure you that this is an organised effort and that most of us are bewildered at the press and radio bias against Africa. As a matter of fact, we find it most difficult to get the truth about your country." — A letter from one of our readers in Argyllshire, Scotland.

● "We must record our deep sorrow at the departure from the Commonwealth of South Africa, a country bound to ourselves with many ties of blood and history. . . . The countries remaining in the Commonwealth must beware of the danger of turning apartheid into a scapegoat. Rather is this an occasion for a humble recognition that there are things within the life and society of all of them, flagrantly in some of them, which in their several ways are an offence against Commonwealth ideals of the dignity and rights of man." — The Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland in its report to the General Assembly.

● "I do not wish to hide my sorrow and regret that South Africa now chooses to break this long-cherished link with the Crown, nor would I wish to withhold my congratulations to, and deep respect for, my Afrikaans fellow-countrymen for whom the 31st (of May) will be the crowning experience of life. In a large measure it will be their day, their hour. But it is also going to be mine. South Africa has given me and mine happiness, joy and material benefits; her hospitality has been wonderful, a hospitality I hope I have not abused. In return I pledge her my loyalty, my service and all the devotion of which a fervid Scot is capable, in the faith that our country has a great role to play in God's scheme of things." — The late Rev. Hector MacDonald, of the Presbyterian Church, in his last pastoral letter to his congregation.

● "If the policy of separate development is to be successful in South Africa, there is one condition to which it must comply and that is that it must be fair, not only in theory but also in practice." — Mr. M. D. C. de Wet Nel, Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, in an address at Stellenbosch.

● "We must treat the non-whites fairly and justly at all times and our attitude must be that of Christians, sincere and dignified. We must respect them for what they are and our attitude towards them must be such that it will cultivate their respect for us." — Mr. F. H. Odendaal, Administrator of the Transvaal, in an address at Nelspruit.

● "While we thank God that there was no serious trouble, as many had feared there might be, before and after Republic Day, it is only fair to thank men also. A word of thanks should go to

those in authority, for the state's display of force probably discouraged some possible trouble-makers, and that force seems to have been displayed on the whole with tact." — A columnist in the Southern Cross (Roman Catholic).

● "Those of us who had had contempt for those unfortunate denominations who came under the barrage of criticism the world over, had to change our opinions, for their representatives left Cottesloe with honour, because they brought into the consultation a clarity of mind that was backed up by faith and sincerity. Indeed, they proved to be the giants of the day. I left Cottesloe full of regret that I ever allowed myself to be influenced so adversely against these brethren of one of the sections of Christ's vineyard." — The Rev. S. P. Lediga, a non-white minister of the Presbyterian Church of S.A., in an article in Ministry on the consultation of S.A. member churches of the W.C.C.

● "It is likely that if the Consultation (of S.A. member churches of the World Council of Churches) had been representative of all the missionary bodies and churches of South Africa, a more cautionary note would have been heard. In view of South Africa's love of isolation and its abhorrence of outside interference, it will be wiser in future to have no international body sponsoring a similar attempt to register or advance progress in regard to racial affairs in our country." — An editorial note in the South African Outlook.

● "Freedom of religion is fundamental to the whole outlook of all the people and churches of South Africa. . . . Freedom of worship also exists, although there have been differences of opinion on what may be necessary to avoid an invasion of the rights of the community to protection against the creation of nuisance in the name of freedom of worship." — The Prime Minister, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, in a letter to the Natal Provincial Council.

NEW BOOKS

The following new books have been published by the D.R.C. Publishers (N.G. Kerk-Uitgewers), P.O. Box 4539, Cape Town, and P.O. Box 245, Pretoria:

ONGETROUDE MOEDERS (Unmarried Mothers): An investigation of the family background of illegitimacy. This is the sixth volume of the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Family Life and is an important work of reference. Price R2.50 (25/-).

VROUE EN MOEDERS WAT WERK (Working Wives and Mothers): The influence of their position on the family and the nation. The seventh volume of the report of the above-mentioned Commission of Inquiry. Price R2.50 (25/-).

NA DIE EIS VAN ELKE DAG (According to the Demand of Every Day), by Professor H. D. A. du Toit: A collection of daily devotional studies by the professor of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria. Price R2.50 (25/-).

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